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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a practicum designed to increase parent and business involvement in the educational experiences of students in grades 4-7 at a rural school in the southeastern United States. Teacher surveys and other data indicated that the students had very little experience or understanding of the business world in which they eventually would function. A review of the literature shows the importance of parental and business involvement, resulting in improved parenting, dropout prevention, and better occupational education. In this project, local businesses were solicited for both services and funding in forming better school partnerships. A local fast-food restaurant, a chain retailer, a manufacturer, and a hospital formed partnerships with the school's fourth-, fifth-, sixth-, and seventh-grade classes, respectively. A local bank donated funds for a school reading center. Parental involvement was increased by encouraging students to seek parents' help on homework, providing parents with a handbook on adolescents' problems, and holding four parent meetings. Success of the program was measured by keeping records of the meetings and by logging perceptions of the business partnerships. Field trips to partnership businesses were perceived to have helped students learn about employment while raising businesses' commitment to education. Parents also seemed receptive to the program. At the meetings, parents discussed new involvement skills and adolescent problems. The document recommends further partnership work and growth of the program. A list of 27 references is included. (TES)

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Increasing Business and Parental Involvement in Grades 4-7 by Forming Partnerships between School and Local Businesses

by

Kay S. Hinson

Cluster 28

A Practicum II Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1990

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ABSTRACT

Increasing Business and Parental Involvement in Grades 4-7 by Forming Partnerships between School and Local Businesses. Hinson, Kay S., 1990: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood.

Descriptors: Business: Career Awareness; Community Attitudes; Community Involvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Program Implementation; Public Relations; Public Schools; Rural Education; School Business Relationship; School Community Relationship; Adopt A School; Partnerships in Education; Community Support; Parent Participation; Volunteers; Parent Meetings; Skills for Adolescents

This practicum was designed to improve the educational experiences of students in grades 4-7 by increasing the involvement of local businesses and parents in the total education of the students. Because middle grade students had very little experience or understanding of the business world in which they will function more and more as they grow older, it was decided that local businesses would be solicited to form partnerships with the school.

The writer determined a need for increased business and parental involvement for students in grades 4-7 based upon teacher input, the State Department of Education's emphasis, and the curriculum of the school. A partnership for each of the grades (4-7) was formed with local businesses. Also, a partnership was formed for the school-at-large. A series of four parent meetings were held at the school in conjunction with the Skills of Adolescents program currently being used with grades six and seven as efforts were made to increase parental involvement.

The partnerships formed proved to provide positive educational experiences for both the students and the employees of the particular businesses. Once needs for each partnership were identified, objectives for the partnership and strategies for implementation were decided upon. Students involved in all partnerships were able to visit the business and have employees explain the purpose, job opportunities, training required, salaries, and other pertinent information to the students. Having the employees of the businesses speak directly with the students helped to communicate the feeling of commitment that each business has made toward the total local educational process. All partnerships will continue for the upcoming school year, and it is hoped that ones can be formed for grades K-3. The four parent meetings were very successful, although attendance at them was not the 33% identified in the practicum objective. Those parents attending responded overwhelmingly in support of the school and its effort to provide a meaningful, well-rounded education for their students.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The school in which this practicum took place is located within a county in rural southeastern United States. The county, which covers approximately 800 square miles of land, has a population of approximately 7,200 residents (Bachtel, 1988). Of these people, approximately 30% are school-age persons between the ages of 5 and 19; 8% are below age 5. Another 23% of the population are between ages 20 and 34; 15% are between ages 35 and 49. Only 13% of the total population of the county is between the ages of 50 and 64; another 10% are age 65 and over. Needless to say, the strength of the county is in its school-age people. Because of the limited employment possibilities of the county, most of the working-age people have to leave this county in order to support themselves. The socioeconomic make-up of the county is generally lower class. The county's per capita income is approximately $8,927 while the state's is approximately $13,224 (Bachtel, 1988). During the recent school term, the total per pupil cost was approximately $3,090 (Lee, 1989).

The main industries of the area are those relating to farm agriculture and pine timber. One large factory, which employs

approximately 700 workers, and one distribution center for a chain of national retail stores, which employs approximately 300, complete the main job markets for people of the area. Other than persons employed by the Board of Education, there are very few people in the county who have earned a college degree. There are several retail stores in the county, but major shopping must be done in larger towns 30-40 miles away. Other than church, the schools of the county provide most all the social activities for the community.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

Within the county, there are one high high school (grades 8-12, approximately 440 students), one middle school (grades 4-7, approximately 419 students), one elementary school (grades K-3, approximately 430 students), and one isolated school which receives state support because of its location (grades K-7, approximately 60 students). In January, the middle school consolidated with grades K-3 at a new educational facility. In the middle grades (4-7), where this practicum was conducted, 49% of the students qualify for free meals, and another 9% qualify for reduced meals. The remaining students pay for their meals. Of the students enrolled, 63% are White with 37% being Black. Males account for 52%; 48% of the students are females.

The middle grades are a part of the county school system which is organized according to the laws of the State and the regulations of the State Board of Education. The county board of education, composed of five elected members, has as its responsibility to adopt policies that establish a framework for the operation of the local system and guide

the administrative process used by the local superintendent (Lee, 1988). Because of the smallness of the county, the public as well as the teachers play an important part in the eduation of the county's children. The local board of education has adopted five goals for the current school year (Lee, 1989):

1. To decrease the percentage of dropouts by 10% in the county school system in 1989-90 over 1988-89.
2. To visit each school at least one time during the 1989-90 school year.
3. To raise the average SAT score for the senior class 10 points in verbal and 10 points in math.
4. To increase systemwide academic recognition and attendance recognition for deserving students.
5. To improve communications among all system employees and between system employees and the public. (p. 1)

In the middle grades, students are grouped by intellectual ability based upon national norm-referenced test scores, state criterion-referenced test scores, and teacher recommendation. Grades four and five have five classes of students. The students of the highest intellectual ability are self-contained with one teacher for all of their subjects. Grades six and seven have four classes of students. Three of the classes are considered to be on grade level; one is considered to be below grade level. Faculty members adjust their methods of teaching in such ways that the needs of the students in each particular class are best met. Special Education programs available include both self-contained and mainstreamed situations in the areas of specific learning disabilities, gifted, EMR, and TMR. The average pupil/teacher ratio is 1:23. The day's instruction is divided into two

blocks of time. One is for math, science, and spelling; the other is for reading, English, social studies, and writing. Thus, most students have two teachers unless they receive special services from Special Education, Chapter I, remedial math, etc.

The faculty for middle grades (4-7) is composed of 32 members, including three Chapter I reading teachers, three Special Education teachers with two aids, one librarian, one half-day counselor, one half-day remedial math teacher, one band/general music/choral music teacher, two physical education teachers, two secretaries, and half-day assistant principal, and one principal. All teachers are assigned classes in their area of certification. Of the faculty, five are male; another three are Black. Forty-seven percent of the faculty have Bachelor's (four year) degrees; 44% have Master's (five year) degrees; 2 people have Education Specialist (six year) degrees. Presently, 10 faculty members are working toward higher degrees at a nearby college. All faculty receive in-depth staff-development training each year within the local system. During the last three years, this system has been involved (as 1 of 9 throughout the state) in piloting the state teacher evaluation instrument being developed.

The writer's first educational experiences began when she entered first grade in this school system and completed high school in the same system. For the writer, 14 of the 18 total years she has taught have been in this same local system--11 years in her present work location. The remaining 3 years were in a neighboring system to which she commuted. Thus, the writer's background includes many experiences with the educational system in which this practicum will be conducted.

The writer is a seventh-grade teacher of reading, English, social studies, and writing to a class of above-average students and a class of

below-average students (the top and bottom groups of the four in the grade). Having received a Bachelor's degree in English as well as a Master's and an Education Specialist's degrees in reading, the writer feels confident in teaching these subjects. Further, she maintains state certification for English, grades 7-12, and reading, grades Kindergarten-12. During her years as a teacher, she has taught grades six through twelve in two public school systems as well as remedial reading to freshmen at a nearby college. Additional training in Project Wr.I.T.E. has further enhanced her strategies for teaching students to write. The writer has recently received 25 hours of training in the utilization of Lions-Quest Skills for Adolescence Program. The goals of this program are to help young people in grades six and seven develop positive social behaviors and develop strong commitments to positive influences so that they will choose to lead a healthy, drug-free life. The writer serves as the facilitator for 40% of the seventh-grade students who are enrolled in this program.

For the 1989-90 school year, the local Board of Education initiated a grade-level lead teacher for grades K-7. The writer was named to serve in this capacity for the seventh grade and received a $250 supplement for this work. The Principal and Superintendent have appointed her to numerous textbook adoption committees in the areas of reading, English, spelling, vocabulary, literature, and social studies as well as giving her other policy-making responsibilities. This writer is one of five teachers in the middle grades who are computer literate and who use computers as a tool for increasing student learning. Further, this writer has encouraged the usage of computers for storing and interpreting local students' scores (state criterion-referenced and national norm-referenced) so the results can be better used for

instruction as well as for curriculum adjustment.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

In recent years, there seems to have evolved an educational trend aimed at "getting back to the basics" while at the same time increasing student test scores on state- and national-normed tests. In the state where the writer teaches, there has recently been tremendous effort, in both time and money, spent in developing a state quality core curriculum (QCC) (Georgia, 1989). This curriculum guide is to be used throughout the state for students in grades K-12 and covers all subjects taught in the public schools of the state. Thus, teachers now have become more concerned with being sure particular subject-matter material is taught so that their students will have achieved the objectives of the QCC.

Although the state department of education has suggested that each local system employ personnel to help establish more business-education partnerships, no state monies have been allocated for this purpose. Thus, the financial burden to fund such projects has fallen upon local systems. Because the local funds in this county are so limited, no one has been employed in these areas. The certified personnel within the school system are already very involved with their teaching duties, serving on numerous local educational committees, training through staff

development activities, and working on higher degrees for certification. Although all administration and faculty realize the urgent need in these areas, no one has had time or energy enough to undertake the responsibility.

Because the community where this practicum took place is very small and resources are limited, most of the activities center around either school or church. Yet, in most instances, there was almost no interaction between the business community and the local school system. There were many business resources which were not being utilized by schools just as there were many educational resources not being utilized by businesses. Consequently, students saw no relation between what they learned at school and how these skills may help them become more successful once they enter the work force. Thus, many students felt there was no community spirit in their existence. This was especially prevalent among middle grade students because there was a much more evident community spirit toward the local high school students in general and athletics in particular.

Students who are mentally capable of attending college are often encouraged to do just that. These same students were challenged to do well on achievement tests and in their school classes so that they would be accepted into college and/or may receive a scholorship. It seems that the college-boud students have been overemphasized at the expense of the vocational students. Yet, the majority of the students in the local school system are vocational and never will attend college. These students were often overlooked as more importance falls upon the college-bound students. This was even evidenced in the local high school as all the honor graduates were students who are receiving academic diploms; under the current system for determining honor

graduates, there is no way for vocational students to be included. The situation has worsened because, in recent years, the state increased the number of academic classes needed for graduation; thus, the high school vocational department has lost three teachers because there were not enough students who have an available period to pursue a vocational course.

Subsequently, the majority of the local students were not being encouraged or taught to their fullest potential. It was very necessary that something be done to emphasize the vocational aspects for students interested more in this than in college. More programs dealing with career education for students prior to entering high school were needed. If younger students were to become more knowledgeable about different careers and opportunities for training for the different careers, the young students would have more direction as they entered high school and had to decide whether to take all academic courses or to pursue a vocational diploma. Having more exposure to various businesses and jobs within the different businesses would help the students learn to make better decisions concerning their careers. This, in turn, would lead to the setting of goals that are more likely to be attained. Thus, the students would become better trained for whatever occupations chosen and happier employees as they become contributing adults in the work force.

In today's world, education is not simply the responsibility of the local and state Boards of Education. It is also the responsibility of businesses to become involved in education. The schools must be certain that their graduates are equipped with the skills needed so that they can become valuable employees. Only involved businesses will be able to provide that input to schools. Having businesses more involved in the eduational process would also provide a sense of community and sharing

for the students. Because of the changing structure of many families, large numbers of students are not receiving the support and encouragement they need in order to achieve and learn to their fullest potential. Thus, many students abandon any goals they may have set for themselves. An involved and supportive business community can provide that important and necessary guidance and support.

In conclusion, the problem that was addressed by this practicum was lack of involvement by local businesses and parents in the education of students in the middle grades. Because of this lack of involvement, most students do not realize themselves as worthwhile contributors to their families or their community. Furthermore, middle grade students had very little experience or understanding of the business world in which they will function more and more as they grow older.

Problem Documentation

Within the last two years, the state department of education formed a new department which is concerned solely with encouraging businesses to become more involved in education. The state department provided several training seminars for educators throughout the state which helped them learn to establish business-education partnerships. The state department has asked each school system to develop partnerships eventhough the state has not funding any local efforts. Previously, the system in which the writer teaches was doing nothing in this respect.

In order to document the problem described in the previous section, the writer solicited the cooperation of the middle grades faculty. A

questionnaire (see Appendix A), developed by the writer, was given to each faculty member who teaches students in grades 4-7. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine the current level of and types of both business and parental involvment at the school. A secondary purpose was to identify some methods for involving businesses and parents which had proven satisfactory in the past. Finally, the faculty members were asked to mention any ideas they had for increasing the involvment of businesses and parents with students in the middle grades.

All twelve persons responding to the questionnaire reported that businesses were not involved enough with the school or with the students' learning. Only one teacher felt that parents were involved enough with the school and students' learning. The faculty indications concerning what percentage of students have "involved" parents ranged from 10 percent to 90 percent with 31 percent being the average. Thus, it was evident that more involvement is needed.

When asked for ideas as to why parents are not as involved as the school may desire, some responded that most parents work and do not have time. Others stated that many parents are not formally educated, are too busy, or put too much responsibility on the schools. Parents not having a healthy respect for education to share with their children and parents not being encouraged or motivated by the school to participate more were given as two additional ideas. Finally, some faculty members explained that many students are from single-parent homes and/or their homes are emotionally instable due to broken homes or poor interpersonal relationships.

Teachers reported that methods used frequently for involving parents included the follcwing: signing student's papers at regular intervals; signing report cards; checking student's homework; and

reading letters sent home about topics and units being studied. Some faculty mentioned that some parents discipline students for poor grades, will conference with teachers when requested as part of Student Support Team action, and will question students about school. Parent involvement had also been noticed by parents reminding students to do homework and study for tests. Some parents will call out information for a test to students to be sure he/she knows the material. In a more negative light, some teachers felt that parents were usually concerned only with failing grades or misbehavior on the student's part.

Faculty members offered numerous suggestions for increasing parental involvement. Many mentioned that parents should be encouraged to be more enthusiastic about student's learning as they encourage students to be positive about school, teachers, and the learning process. Others explained that parents could be asked to volunteer as aides for the school, give demonstration/lecture on relevant topics being studied, and visit school on certain days so the parents can attend class with their student. Asking parents to sign a not indicating they have helped their student at home and to reward students for good work was another suggestion. Having several school-related events (picnic, educational film, etc.) on weekends and more parent meetings dealing with relevant topics of parental interest were described as worthwhile activities for increasing involvement.

Many faculty members indicated that parents should be made more aware of the need for certain study time to be set aside daily for their children. Further, parents reading together with their children would also help. In general, it was felt that parents showing more interest in the subject matter being taught at school would help the students realize parents care. Setting aside a special week during the year as

"Parent Week" and allowing parents to lead meaningful class activities for the students was also suggested. Finally, the school could survey parents to see what types of information and services they would like from the school; this should help strengthen communication and interaction between school and home.

All teachers surveyed indicated that area businesses are not involved enough with the school and the students' learning. It was further noted that there is generally more support for athletics than for academics. Some local businesses had contributed funds or products produced for spcial class projects. Some businesses have donated door prizes for teachers' meetings.

The overriding idea for increasing business involvment seemed to be that students should become more knowledgeable of different vocations available in the local work places and learn of the different skills and knowledge needed for the particular jobs. It was suggested that students set up a business themselves so they can begin to understand all involved. Having a Vocation Day for area business and professional people to speak to the students explaining their jobs and asking businesses to provide favors for parties or rewards for good work were two suggestions for increasing business involvement. Allowing students to visit local businesses so the students would more fully understand the function of a particular business and its employees was also an idea indicated on the questionnaire.

Several teachers indicated that the school could identify a list of "needs" which different businesses could consider as ways of helping the local school. Having various businesses "adopt" a class and letting the class visit that particular business as the employees explained their jobs being sure to describe specific and practical ways that math,

English, science, etc. are used in the day-to-day operation of that business was another suggestion. This may help students realize a need to learn the content material they are taught in school. Others suggested encouraging businesses to allow young people (either for pay or as a service project) to work at the particular business. This should help the students develop greater responsibility and feeling of self-worth. Finally, it was indicated that the school should be more concerned with expressing appreciation to businesses that are or do become more actively involved with the school.

Another way this problem was documented was by identifying the five goals for the school year which have been adopted by the local board of education. One of the goals is improving communication between system employees and the public; another is decreasing the percentage of dropouts by 10% in 1989-90 over 1988-89 (Lee, 1989). This clearly indicated the local board's committment to increase and improve relationships between the school system and others in the area. Certainly, involving businesses and parents more in the educational process of the county's school children would improve communication.

Another indication that both the administrators and teachers in the local system realized there was a need for strong committments to be developed between students and adults in the community has been in the identification of students who seem to be at-risk and have the potential for dropping out of school once they reach the age of 16. Fourth and fifth grade teachers identified 23 students in these two grades (see Appendix B). Twenty-three local adults volunteered to become support systems for the identified at-risk students; training sessions have been held for these community members. It is hoped that having more adult involvment and support with these students will help them become better

persons in general and better students in particular.

A final method of problem documention was provided by the local Chamber of Commerce. This agency realized there was a need for businesses to work with the school system in assuring that students not only complete high school but also realize and experience business involvement in their school experiences. The Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution concerning this (see Appendix C) and published it in the local newspaper.

Causative Analysis

The most obvious cause for lack of involvement by local businesses and parents in the education of students in the middle grades was that the local school board presently had no administrative person who has time or interest for following the state department of education's encouragement that businesses and educators must become partners in education. Recently, the superintendent of schools accepted help from the writer of this practicum in this particular area.

Teachers surveyed in the middle grades felt students have limited parental concern in their education because parents are more concerned with employment and financial stability which leaves very little time for quality involvement with their children at school or at home (see Appendix B). Although teachers agreed there was a need, none have had time or interest to attempt to increase parental involvement. Only recently have teachers realized the need to identify students who seem at-risk for becoming future dropouts because they experience very little success in the middle grades. Thus in the past, no additional efforts

were made to help these students become more involved with their parents, other adults, or local business persons.

Another cause of the identified problem was that local businesses had not become completely aware that they must participate in the educational system if the schools are to graduate qualified employees. It is the opinion of the writer that this situation existed because the local school system had not made a concerted effort to communicate effectively with businesses. A final significant cause of the problem was that, until recently, no effort by the school system was made to help local businesses realize the harm they are doing to dropouts themselves or to the school system by hiring full-time workers who had quit school without graduating.

The Related Literature

A review of the related literature revealed numerous reasons why businesses and parents are not involved in the educational process of students in the middle grades. Numerous articles stressed the importance of a strong need for community to become involved in education. Gandara (1989) explained that students who lack a sense of community are poor students who do not benefit much from the educational system of which they are a member. She acknowledged that families make the greatest difference in how children do in school, but she questioned that schools are doing much to help students from families which offer little support. She explained that both parents and students must have a strong conviction that they belong in the social order of society. Persons from the middle class seem to believe they are in control of

their lives; those from the lower class often feel their future is beyond their control. Thus, the society must do something to help everyone realize their potential for being a worthwhile, contributing adult. Schools and parents must work together to create communities that will nurture all children.

Danzberger and Usdan (1984) addressed the problem of being sure community partnerships among businesses and educational systems are operated correctly in such a way that both parties of the relationship derive mutual gain. Otherwise, business-education partnerships will have failed. They cited the failures of some partnerships because they had not developed collaborative strategies among all involved. Danzberger and Usdan described the problems facing one large city. One was that business leaders failed to recognize that positive rapid economic development for the area depended heavily upon the public schools serving that area; a tarnished city image created more problems.

Ascough (1979) described the widening gap that has developed within the last twenty years between schools and community. This gap is possible explanation for the declining achievement of many school students. Also, the credibility assigned to school systems has lessened in recent years. Ascough explained this may result from lack of involvement by businesses in the total educational process. Subsequently, schools no longer completely prepare persons for life in society as active, successful adults. This problem is compounded by very little community involvement. Perhaps this is because the child's first teachers (his parents) have not been active in the learning process. According to Ascough, many public schools lack adequate resources to meet the diverse needs of today's changing and complex society. Thus, the gap between schools and community has increased.

According to Aldridge (1989), teachers often overlook opportunities for purposeful involvement in the local communities when trying to teach students practical applications of the life skills they are teaching in the classroom. Also few schools take full advantage of their opportunities for community involvement. She cited excessive paperwork, lack of curriculum control, and little respect for changing and improving as the main reasons many teachers do not fully use the community resources readily available to them.

Calvin and Keen (1982) indicated that business leaders have finally realized that the healthiness of the schools reflects the overall status of the community. Thus, there needs to be ways to help channel more private funds into education. They also explained that many times businesses do not support public education because they do not know how to provide funds or services; often businesses do not even know what educational systems need.

Finally, an article written by Woodside (1986) provided additional information concerning general partnerships between schools and businesses. He cautioned that educational systems must be certain they are receiving support from the business world that will truly help the educational process of young people. Educational systems should realize that, more important than money, businesses should have personal involvement and commitment to offer to students through partnerships. Further, he explained that many problems currently felt by school systems are the results of lack of funding and support from the business world and especially lawmakers who also control funds. Woodside reported that it is just as important that the quality of teaching improve, especially upgrading the rewards and status of teachers.

The literature review provided numerous sources for particular

examples of school/business partnerships. Mitric (1989) described efforts of a New York businessman to help lower the high number of dropouts in his area. Mitric explained that something must be done to identify potential at-risk students at an early age so that they can be encouraged to remain in school until they graduate. She explained that many students drop out of school once they reach mandatory age because many schools do not provide the needed emotional and/or academic support for children of troubled families and because students realize no future need for a high school diploma.

"Pupils Guaranteed" (1989) also dealt with college educations. It was explained that often scholarship funds are available to students for college educations, but the funds are not always used because no one makes their availability known to the students. Thus, poorer students are less likely to even graduate from high school because they have no funds for college or other high education.

Farabee (1989) told of third grade students from a nearby community having difficulty learning to use math skills in every day settings. Although the students could perform mathematical functions, they were unable to understand any relevance between the math skills and their daily lives. Realizing how math would affect their futures was equally as difficult. Teachers were frustrated in their efforts to make the learning of math skills more meaningful. Bowman (1989) described the difficulty teachers of grades 3-5 had experienced when trying to teach basic principles of banking to students. The students did not seem to understand the concepts of savings, interest, loan, repayment, and check writing.

Hancock (1979) explained that students often have no idea or experience concerning career opportunities that may be in their future;

thus, they are unprepared for their life following school. Hancock stressed that in many schools, particularly rural areas, there is no program which provide students the opportunity to participate in activities of career exploration, career development, job preparation, job placement, and continuing education. Schools must form partnerships with community resources to accomplish these things.

Additional information dealing with career education was reported by Ruffin (1984). He explained that the educational system as it now exists cannot provide youth with all they need in career planning. The present problem stems from many past educators having been reluctant to involve business and industry in the educational system. This conclusion was based on such things as business persons not understanding school functions, fear of negative criticism, businesses would care only about vocational students, and the professional image of teachers may be harmed.

Baker (1989) identified a major problem: young people lack the education and skills for today's jobs. She explained that students are unprepared for today's jobs because the school, students, and teachers can not function as separate entities; rather the students, parents, and entire community must be jointly involved in students' educational experiences. The workplace of today has less demand for unskilled workers and more demand for employees with knowledge and technological skills.

A review of related literature revealed numerous writings which focused on the importance of parental involvement. Many provided examples of activites and projects that have been used to increase parental involvement. Lockledge and Matheny (1989) reported on a common situation found in many public schools. Most teachers realize the value

of involving parents in the child's education. Yet, most teachers do not know the proper and/or most advantageous way to accomplish this. They interviewed over 60 adult readers to determine where and what type of initial reading experiences led to their becoming adults who enjoy reading. The interviews showed that most had their first meaningful reading activities with their families. Only when the family structure had not been evident did most report that school had made the difference. Thus, it became even more necessary for schools to work with families and vice versa. Realizing that the family structure of today differs greatly from that of 50 years ago serves only to compound the problem.

Not only must educators realize that all families are different, but also they must know what the families expect from the school system. Garvin (1987) explained that unless educators know what the students' parents expect from that particular school, they will not be they are fulfilling parent expectations. He cited his experience as an interviewer through the National Commission on Excellence as the basis for a rank order list of the nine most common response made by parent when asked what they wanted the school to provide for their students. Only after the school is aware of these expectations can the school actually begin to educate the whole child.

Hering (1988) explained how the American family has changed in recent years. Now, many students are from one-parent homes or families with two working parents. The school must change to help accomodate students' families because students who have unhappy home situations are poor learners. He cited statistics from the U. S. Census Bureau showing that students from one-parent homes differ from students from two-parent homes in such aspects as tardiness, discipline, suspensions, dropouts,

and even intelligence. Thus, educators must compensate for these areas where students have weaknesses.

According to Clarke-Stewart (1989), divorce often makes life more difficult for students and that teachers must help keep school from being one more problem during such a traumatic time for a child. Teachers who are umsympathetic or not understanding about the trauma created by a divorce in a child's family often damage the child in very serious ways. Such negative educational experiences may lead to eventual dropping out of school or poor learning on the shild's part.

The review of literature provided several sources for specific ideas concerning methods for increasing and improving parental involvement in the educational process of their children. McLaughlin and Shields (1987) reported that teachers and administrators must be motivated to try new practices and strategies for involving parents. Parents will not become involved in the educational process simply because there are rules or mandates saying they will. They also reported that increasing parental involvement for poor or underachieving students is a promising method for improving their achievment. Yet, school must make a concerted effort to involve the parents.

Gray (1984) stated that a school volunteer program must be organized properly if it is to help cut costs, improve productivity, and increase student achievement. Being sure such programs are organized and operated properly is often difficult. Gray continued by explaining that many times volunteer programs do not function successfully because workers are assigned a particular task without the expected outcome having been defined and no system having been established for determining how well the objectives were met. Thus, a hastily begun volunteer program is quickly eliminated.

According to Wilhelmi (1988), teachers must do more that simply send home a memo to ensure that parents are getting the proper message from the school. Because teachers are usually in a rush, very little thought is given to the notes they send home. The memos rarely explain the purpose for a particular learning activity, rarely provide an overview of some aspect of eary adolescent education theory, or rarely display the teacher's expertise in a particular subject area. Yet, teachers who pay more attention to the messages they send home have noticed more parental involvment and communication between home and school.

Andrus and Joiner (1989) described a school system in which students needed to develop a sense of community and belonging to that community. They found that many adolescents have no feeling of caring or concern for other young people or adults around them. This may be the result of the educational system which stresses only academics and achievement with very little interest given toward community service and affective learning. They clearly explained that young adults who do not develop the appropriate attitudes toward helping others will not develop into adults who care and help.

Finally, Jones (1989) explained that an area school system was concerned about the dropout rate and thought that providing positive parenting skill instruction for parents might help students remain in school. It was realized that there had never been any type instruction with that community or school system that would teach positive parenting skills. Thus, the need was there, and it was hoped that providing such instruction would help students remain in school until graduation.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum project was to increase business and parental involvement with students and teachers in grades 4-7. Grades 4-7 are considered the middle grades at the school where this practicum was conducted.

Behavioral Objectives

The specific objectives that were addressed by this practicum project included the following:

1. Business involvement with the middle grades (4-7), based upon needs, goals, and strategies identified by teachers, will increase from 0 to 5 partnerships, with each grade having a partnership and one additional partnership for the school as a whole. The five partnerships will be documented by logs kept by the writer of the practicum and by a survey of the teachers following implementation.

2. Parental involvement will increase from 0% to 33% in grades six and seven, which represents an attendance of 36 parents/family members

of the 109 sixth-grade students and 38 parents/family members of the 114 seventh-grade students, at each of the four night meetings to be held for parents/family members of students in grades six and seven. Attendance records of parents/family members attending the meetings will be kept.

Measurement of Objectives

A log in narrative form was kept by the writer of the practicum. This log validated all stages of implementation. A written review was provided for each of the school/business partnerships formed. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was completed by all teachers following implementation. The results of the practicum were positive if a total of five partnerships were formed. The results of the questionnaire were analyzed and presented in table and narrative form.

Records of parental/family member attendance were kept for the four night meetings held for parents of sixth- and seventh-grade students. Further, having 33% of the students in sixth grade and 33% of those in seventh grade represented by at least one parent/family member in attendance at each of these meetings would provide favorable results for this practicum. This information will be presented in table form and discussed.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Gandara (1989) asserted that educators must realize that students are first members of a family. This family refers not only to relatives but also to those community members who live nearby. With a strong support system, a community school results. School buildings are used year-round, in the evenings, and on weekends. Community members hold meetings there as well as frequently visit there during school hours. Volunteers should always be available at the schools to help students and teachers. By doing these things, the school would become a community resource center as the ideas of school and community begin to merge. Everyone would begin to feel that education is important and deserves the respect of the entire community. Businesses might even provide release time for parents and other community members to spend time in the schools. Certainly this would convey the ideas that school is serious business and communities are partners in that business.

Building partnerships seemed to be the solution according to Danzberger and Usdan (1984). The first step of the partnership process was conducting meetings throughout the city involved to learn what the public thought of its school and to establish a list of priorities for

the school system. The following four priorities were set as a result: improve student skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and computation; help students in preparing for their futures; equitably allocate the school system's resources; and improve communication between school and public, between school and students, and among school staff members themselves. It was realized that not only the schools but also the entire community must commit to these goals if they were to be achieved. The media was used to help inform and involve the public. Professionals from higher education were used to provide staff development in forming partnerships. More emphasis was placed on parental involvement through the formation of Parent/Teacher Associations for each school. Finally, three-way partnerships were formed involving public schools, higher education institutions, and businesses.

Danzberger and Usdan (1984) summarized both the strengths and weaknesses of the partnerships formed. One strength is that of fostering mutual trust and sense of common interests between the educational system and the world of business. This openness allowed the strengths and weaknesses of the schools to be discussed in a business-like manner with input for improvements coming from business persons as well as educators. The area businesses felt that the school system was asking for specific advise and active participation; the schools were no longer simply asking for money. Further, the school systems was asking for human resources, shared services, and political support. One problem remaining is how to ensure that the partnerships formed continue to function positively over a long period of time. Public relations must continue to be important as those involved strive to form more partnerships in the area. Another problem, according to

Danzberger and Usdan, is getting adequate information to the particular businesses about the schools with which they will be working. Finally, efforts must continue to re-educate the general public into believing that businesses should be involved in education.

Details of the benefits that a school-business partnership can produce were detailed by Ascough (1979). The feeling of unity of purpose is the most significant result of partnerships. Students have been able to learn basic economic skills from different businesses' activities with the schools. The business community has provided valuable advice and assistance to make sure career education programs used in the schools are meaningful and related to today's society. Many Chamber of Commerce organizations have coordinated the partnership efforts and served as the main link between businesses and schools. One of the most successful programs has been the "adopt-a-school" one. This program is initiated when schools identify their needs and companies assess their interests and available resources. The matching process follows and joint activities ensue. It is reported that a truly involved community will utilize all aspects of community. These include making full use of all businesses; realtors; religious groups; local, state, and federal agencies; parent/teacher associations; higher/private education; youth services; and district advisory committees.

The use of community service projects for students and school/business exchanges were suggested by Aldridge (1989) as ways of increasing the community's participation in the local educational system. Because students in the middle grades are beginning to form their own value systems, channeling their feelings toward worthwhile interactions with persons in the community will make the students feel more useful. Students' sense of self-worth will improve as they learn

to contribute to society rather than simply using society. Aldridge prefered school/business exchanges rather than partnerships. She explained that the most effective partnerships involve an exchange of services and not just donations of money. Further, it is important that students provide services for the businesses as students become more active members of society. Helping students to experience personal satisfaction and to gain confidence as they mature are two results of community projects and school/business exchanges.

Establishing a community foundation to assist in funding for the public schools was described by Calvin and Keen (1984). The community foundation can act as agent for donors who want to financially support the school system. There should be a board of directors to oversee the foundation and a director to attend to the day-to-day operations. Needs of particular school systems must be identified and the needs related to sources of funds that can be used for those particular needs. Thus, the schools are helped, and the foundation donors feel satisfied with their participation.

Woodside (1986) offered several generalized ideas relating to how and why businesses should form partnerships with schools. Yet, his main thrust was that partnerships will have little meaning in the long run if the context of public education is not affected. Partnerships which have successfully operated for several years have proven that the business community and the schools are capable of working together toward common goals. Businesses have also made many otherwise unattainable projects possible because of their funding support. The basis for continued positive results of partnerships lies in the business community's ability to realize that the fate of public education is in their hands. Thus, business persons should become

stronger political advocates for education. This would lead to increased funding for education which, in turn, would lead to improved curriculum programs in the schools. Thus, students would have opportunities to learn skills that will help make them successful adults in years to come.

The review of literature provided numerous examples of particular school/business partnerships that have been developed and implemented in various communities. One was described by Mitric (1989). One New York businessman has made significant individual efforts to combat the problem of student dropouts. The solution described tells of the businessman's having guaranteed some New York youths completely-paid college educations with the requirement that they remain in school until high school graduation and they apply themselves toward learning. This program attempts to give the students the emotional and academic support students need to do well in school. "Pupils Guaranteed" (1989) described a similar partnership involving students in Georgia. The businessman has agreed to fund college education for 57 students who are now in elementary school. The students must remain in school until they graduate to be able to receive their college education. These two partnerships are part of the "I Have a Dream" program which was started in 1982 and now operates in 26 cities and helps about 6,000 students.

A partnership between a third grade and the local hospital was described by Farabee (1989). The town's main employer, the hospital, will provide students the opportunity to see basic math skills being used in the business office, the laboratory, and the food service areas. Students will study such tasks as scheduling, time cards, payroll, working with FICA, inventory, and business machines. Then students will visit the hospital to observe these same tasks in actual operation. The

students will then simulate the hospital's business office in their own classrooms as they adapt the tasks to activities in class. The laboratory will demonstrate usage of measurement; food services will review diets, measurements, making change, and using census figures. Also, employees of the hospital will speak with the students telling of the many career opportunities available from the hospital as employer.

According to Bowman (1989), the Junior Bank program was started to help students in grades 3-5 better understand the basic conceps of banking. Representatives from local banks visit the classes once a month and take deposits from the students. Students are allowed to deposit between $1 and $5. Each student fills out his own deposit slip and balances his account monthly as part of math class. Students may withdraw funds from their account by writing complimentary checks. The withdrawals include 5.5 percent interest. At the end of the school year, students can withdraw their money or allow it to remain in savings until the next school term. Bank employees often explain banking procedures when they visit the classes. They also provide information about careers in banking.

Hancock (1979) described the partnership fromed with the Cooperative Extension Service through 4-H Club, which is available to students in grades 5-12, and career awareness. The 4-H leaders can help classroom teachers and staff, of any grade level, develop programs and activities directed toward career awareness, career exploration, self-development, and vocational orientation. Another benefit 4-H involvement can have is in coordinating community and university resources by having more involvement in the public schools. Finally, 4-H career education programs can help coordinate university personnel to conduct seminars, workshops, and training for teachers so teachers

can develop skills and techniques to be used in the classroom.

Ruffin (1984) first reviewed the basic concepts of school/business partnerships that are inherent to a worthwhile partnership. He explained that it is important to identify the expectations of schools, to involve and have support from the staff, to know the expectations of businesses, and to follow the guide of successful partnerships already in existance. Ruffin concluded by describing work-study programs for students that provide wonderful opportunities for students who are still in school to have practical experiences with a particular business as they work there on a part-time basis. Thus, work-study programs serve as a beneficial source of career education.

Baker (1989) stated that businesses had to get involved in the educational process if there are to be qualified workers to employ in the future. Business persons are often well-qualified observers and evaluators. Businesses also have the best-trained staffs and equipment designed to facilitate problem solving. She then described several different programs that serve to improve career knowledge and training for school students. Some businesses prefer helping individual students; others prefer to adopt an entire school. Providing business persons to serve as tutors for school children is another method for improving education. Some businesses are willing to provide instructors for particular units of study, and donating equipment is an additional method used to involve businesses in education. Establishing trust funds and foundations, meeting with school administrators, providing incentives for teachers, and encouraging innovation are others described by Baker.

Numerous ideas for improving parental involvement with the child's education were also found in the literature review. Lockledge and

Matheny (1989) explained that teachers do not realize and allow for individual differences that exist among families as being the main reason many parents do not become involved in their child's educational process. The writers then provided several strategies that can be used to maximize positive family experiences of all students. Sending school news and special materials to the home and inviting parents to school to observe the teacher were two suggested. Using parents on committees and as volunteers, forming active parental support groups so ideas can be disseminated and enhanced, and displaying students' work both in the school and in the community were additional suggestions. Above all, Lockledge and Matheny stressed the idea that all families are different, that difference should be recognized, and positive activites should be developed to accentuate the positive aspects of each family.

Garvin's research (1987) proved that parents do have certain expectations of the schools their children attend. The educators should be aware of these. Parents want students to feel safe, to know at least one adult which can support their students, to have teachers help the students make friends and involve them in activities, and to enjoy pleasurable activities so they will want to return to school. Other expectations included the following: preparing them for high school, keeping the parents informed on student progress, feeling welcomed to visit the school, and helping parents to know what is expected from their children. (p. 2-3) Garvin's interviews also found that most parents care about their young people, want to participate in their educational process, and are willing to become involved if they are given the opportunity. The solution offered was that schools must seek their involvement.

Hering (1988) suggested three areas for improvement which can help

children from one-parents homes: (a) attitude of educators about single parents; (b) accessibility of educators to the working adult; and (c) availability of guidance facilities to both the student and the parent. A list of 25 specific suggestions which relate to these three areas was provided. The suggestions included the following: revising school calendars so that working parents have access to school employees, offering effective programs in the field of "parenting" for the families, providing child care during school functions, and avoiding sterotyping that assumes that a behavior problem is automatically linked to the family situation. All of the ideas given by Hering are simple and very inexpensive.

Clarke-Stewart (1989) explained that teachers and other educators must be supportive of children from families that are divorcing or have been divorced. Teachers should be provided with staff development so that they can develop strategies for helping the students deal with divorce. Special group counseling can be held at school for students whose parents are divorced. For many middle age students, simply knowing that other students their own age share similar situations and problems will lessen the problems for the children. Schools should also help prepare students themselves for adult roles they may lead later. Discussions concerning the difficulties and challenges of marriage and family life as well as preparation to pursue lucrative careers will help.

McLaughlin and Shields (1987) reported that teachers and building principals may need a certain amount of pressure and support from the district level administrators concerning increasing parental involvement. They explained this is particularly the case with low-income families. The policy makers at the district, or even state,

level will have to convince the local educators of this need, Activites should be provided for educators to help them realize the need for involving the parents. Only then will they completely support such a project. One particular way this can be accomplished is through partnership councils within each school. Each council is composed of 50% staff and 50% community members/parents. The councils are important as they plan, conduct needs assessment, and evaluate programs used in the school. McLaughlin and Shields reported that these councils had been effective because they have provided parents with some decision-making authority although they are not dominated by parents. Thus, the parents feel what they think is important as they become more involved.

Gray (1984) explained the benefits of school volunteer programs as the following: increase productivity by extending the reach and effect of the paid staff, improve teacher enthusiasm, increase community awareness of workings of the school, increase financial support for schools, and increase business support for the school system. She explained in detail that school/business partnerships have advantages for both the school and the businss. By forming partnerships, businesses are able to exercise their social responsibility and to improve their community image. Also, businesses can influence the way tax money is spent in education and earn tax breaks for the business itself. Finally, businesses can contribute directly to programs that will provide a continuing supply of future employees.

Wilhelmi (1988) described how teachers should prepare memos for parents that will be more effective than the ones usually sent home. Teachers should use every available opportunity to teach, even teach the parents. Teachers should use memos to assure parents that they know

what they are doing. They can also be used to subtly boast of the teachers as professionals and communicate their broad goals. The memo should also explain in a professional way suitable for the particular audience of parents what the students are being taught, why what is being taught is relevant, and that the way it is being taught is appropriate for adolescents. Thus, teachers will be advertising their expertise and educating the parents at the same time.

A community that needed H.U.G.S.S. was described by Andrus and Joiner (1989). They explained how one school initiated service projects for their students and the short- and long-term effects these service projects had both for the students and the people they helped. The project was called "Helping Us Grow Through Service and Smiles." Grades six, seven, and eight were divided into nine academic teams. Each team adopted a community agency in their location. Representatives from each agency visited its team to explain the purpose and activities of that particular agency. Brainstorming was then used to generate ideas for ways the students could further help the agency become more effective. These ideas were them implemented and evaluated. The results reported were very positive. More community based learning has been added to the curriculum, and student volunteers actively return to the community the feelings of joy, worth, and caring that have been given to them through these activities.

The rural community involved in the project described by Jones (1989) is experienceing positive outcomes from the parenting sessions being taught there. This has been the result of a partnership between the school and the local bank and textile mill. Seminars are held one night a week for three weeks at the textile mill itself. The program targets middle grade students of workers. The parents have informative

sessions dealing with the state requirements for high school students, how to deal with school stress, and how parents can work with teachers and school administrators. The most significant outcome has been the improved self-worth felt by the parents because the school system has shown that it cares about the parents.

Description of Selected Solution

The writer of this practicum thought that the time was right to attempt to increase business and parental involvement in the local school system, particularly in the middle grades (4-7). The writer felt that by increasing community involvment in the educational process, students themselves would feel more committment to developing themselves as responsible adults. The State Department of Education encouraged all school systems to establish school/business partnerships; the local Board of Education set a goal of improving communication with the general public and within the professional system. Consequently, the policy making bodies, as suggested by McLaughlin and Shields (1987), had given their support to a project such as this practicum.

Particularly, the writer relied upon the research conducted by Danzberger and Usdan (1984), Aldridge (1989), and Ruffin (1984) as she attempted to form school/business partnerships for each of the four grades 4-7 as well as for the entire school as a whole. Realizing the characteristics of effective and noneffective partnerships given by Danzberger and Usdan (1984) proved very benificial to the writer of the practicum. Following the suggested steps for establishing meaningful partnerships explained by Ruffin (1984) helped the writer. The main

goal of the partnerships formed was service rather than simply donated money; Aldridge (1989) described how this makes the partnership more meaningful to both the business and the students involved.

All students in grades five, six, and seven of the school involved in this practicum are allowed to become 4-H Club members with the homeroom teachers serving as adult leaders. As described by Hancock (1979), coordinated efforts between the Cooperative Extension Service and teachers can provide more emphasis on career awareness, career exploration, self-development, and vocational orientation. The writer of this practicum requested available resources from the Cooperative Extension Service be utilized in the sharing of information with the students in grades five, six, and seven.

Brief, thought-provoking, and informative discussions were held at formal and informal meetings to help the local educators realize that students' home environments are different and, thus, require that student expectations may need to be adjusted (Hering, 1988, and Lockledge and Matheny, 1989). Having parent-teacher conferences at night as well as during the school day and immediately after school would make teachers and educators more accessible to working parents. Also, because this is a small community, many teachers provided parents the opportunity to phone them at home. Finally, a full-time counselor at the school has been employed for the next term. This person will be able to provide more guidance and counseling to both students and parents.

Report of Action Taken

The writer of this practicum met with the principal and the teachers from each grade to discuss results of questionnaire (see Appendix B). Strategies for forming a school/business partnership for each grade and one for the entire school were discussed. Needs, goals, and desired outcomes for each partnership planned were decided upon during these meetings so that the businesses and the teachers knew from the beginning of the partnerships exactly what services and/or funds were being requested. The particular businesses to seek for partnerships were decided upon by each grade committee at its meeting. The decisions reached during each committee meeting are described by grade in the following sections. The strategies for implementation of the indicated objectives were coordinated by the writer of this practicum.

Fourth Grade

The main interest of fourth-grade teachers was that students become more knowledgeable concerning different occupations possible that do not require a college education but do provide financial stability for employees. It was decided that representatives from the area vocational-technical school would speak to fourth-grade students and a partnership would be formed with the local Hardee's.

Objectives for Partnership

-To provide students the opportunity to learn more about the area

vocational-technical school in an effort to motivate students toward setting realistic goals for their future education and employment

-To allow local business owner and employees of Hardee's to explain their jobs, salary, training required, etc. to students in hopes some may want to seek employment in similar jobs

-To provide rewards for those students having perfect attendance in school

-To provide public recognition for Hardee's for their partnership with the fourth grade

Strategies for Implementation

-Representatives from the area vocational-technical school will visit fourth-grade students explaining admissions, cost, programs available etc.

-The owners and employees of Hardee's will visit the students to explain their job responsibilities, training required, salary, etc.

-Hardee's will be asked to provide complimentary coupons for students having perfect attendance in school

-Newspaper articles with pictures and radio announcements with local media will publicize the partnership between Hardee's/Dairy Queen.

-A plaque of appreciation will be presented at the annual Chamber of Commerce to Hardee's for their partnership with fourth grade.

Fifth Grade

It was decided that the fifth-grade class would form a partnership

with the local Dollar General Distribution Center and Dollar General Store. It was hoped that students would learn more about the retail and distribution aspects of a business. The Distribution Center provides merchandise for the entire southeastern United States.

Objectives for Partnership

-To teach students more about a retail business and the distribution center for that business
-To allow students the opportunity to visit a computerized distribution center and understand the processes used as goods are shipped from the center to retail stores
-To allow students the opportunity of touring a retail store as the manager and employees explain their job responsibilities, salary, training required, etc.
-To provide displays of students' art work for the lounge area of Dollar General Distribution Center
-To provide public recognition for Dollar General's partnership with fifth grade

Strategies for Implementation

-Classroom study will focus on the distributing of goods to be sold in retail stores. Additional educational activities will help teach consumer awareness and skills needed for shopping wisely.
-Students will tour both the Dollar General Distribution Center and Dollar General Store hearing explanations from managers and employees concerning their particular jobs. Information will be given concerning

the different jobs available, training, salary, etc.

-Teachers of fifth-grade students will provide examples of students' art work to be displayed throughout the year in the lounge area of the distribution center.

-Newspaper articles with pictures and radio announcements with local media will publicize Dollar General's partnership with the fifth grade.

-A plaque of appreciation will be presented to Dollar General at the annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

Sixth Grade

It was decided that a partnership would be formed between Brockway Standard, the main factory in the community, and the fifth grade. The emphasis will be placed upon students becoming more aware of job opportunities there as well as learning more about what the business produces. The usage of machinery on an assembly line will relate to the Industrial Revolution studied in sixth-grade social studies. This business was identified because it employees more workers than any other in the area; thus, this is where most of the students' parents or friends work.

Objectives for Partnership

-To provide students the opportunity to learn more about the products made from metal at Brockway Standard

-To allow students an opportunity to hear various employees describe their job description, training required, salary, etc.

-To provide students with the opportunity to tour Brockway Standard as

employees describe what is being done in each part of the factory

-To provide displays of students' art work for the cafeteria area of Brockway Standard

-To provide public recognition for Brockway Standard's partnership with sixth grade

Strategies for Implementation

-Classroom study will focus on the Industrial Revolution and how that has affected modern factories.

-Employees from Brockway will visit the sixth-grade students to tell them about their various jobs, responsibilities, required training, salary, etc.

-Students will tour Brockway Standard while employees explain what the students are seeing.

-Teachers of sixth-grade students will provide examples of students' art work to be displayed throughout the year in the cafeteria area of Brockway.

-Newspaper articles with pictures and radio announcements with local media will publicize Brockway's partnership with sixth grade.

-A plaque of appreciation will be presented to Brockway Standard at the annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

Seventh Grade

It was decided that the seventh grade class would form a partnership with the hospital, which is the local 84-bed medical facility. There are three doctors in the area which admit patients to

this hospital. The Emergency Rescue Squads, which are funded by county monies, are also headquartered at the hopsital. There are X-ray and laboratory facilities with more extensive testing having to be sent to a larger medical complex 40 miles away.

Objectives for Partnership

-To help students become more knowledgeable concerning medical services available in the county
-To provide hospital employees interaction with adolescent students in an effort to encourage the adolescents to use the medical facilities more efficiently
-To provide students the opportunity to learn about the different employment positions available in health care
-To allow students with parental permission the opportunity to have their blood type determined
-To provide examples of students' art work to be displayed in the hospital lobby
-To provide public recognition for the hospital for its partnership with the seventh grade

Strategies for Implementation

-Various employees of the hospital will visit the seventh-grade classes to explain and describe the jobs available as well as the education and training needed for each job.
-Representatives from the following positions will talk with the students: administrator, RN/LPN, laboratory, nurses aid, custodian,

recordkeeping, and EMT.

-Seventh-grade students will tour the hospital as medical personnel there explain and demonstrate the various aspects of medical care.

-Students who have parental permission will have their blood typed; an identification card indicating blood type will be given to each student typed. This information will also be placed on file at the hospital.

-Teachers of seventh-grade students will provide examples of students' art work to be displayed in the lobby area throughout the school year.

-Newspaper articles with pictures and radio announcements will be provided to local media in order to publicize the hospital's partnership with the seventh grade.

-A plaque of appreciation will be presented during the annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet to the hospital for their partnership with seventh grade.

Media Center and School-At-Large

The Media Specialist at the school asked the writer of this practicum to help her secure funds for providing incentives to students for reading. It was decided that a partnership with the local bank would be formed to help recognize those students who read to learn. The bank was be asked to provide funds for purchasing the rewards that accompany the Accelerated Reader Program for grades 4-7. This program allows students to earn points by reading books and successfully answering questions about each book on computer. This program has proven to provide strong motivation for students and to provide many hours of pleasure reading. Newspaper articles with pictures and radio announcements will be provided to publicize the donations made by the

bank. A plaque of appreciation will be presented to the bank at the annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet. The following list indicates the materials needed and the costs for them:

Rewards for Accelerated Reader Program

18 T-Shirts @ $5.95 each		$107.10
18 Badges @ $ .75		13.50
18 Book Bags @ $5.95 each		107.10
18 Book Covers (10 for $3.95) * 2		7.90
18 Book Marks @ $2.80 each		50.40
18 Packs of Pencils @ $2.40 each		43.20
	Total	$329.20

The writer of this practicum contacted personnel of a local convenience store to seek partnership with this business for the entire school. This business was asked to provide the following:

(a) refreshments for the visit to the new school which was planned for all students in grades K-7 prior to moving into the new facility near the first of 1990. The writer of this practicum was asked by the administration to plan and coordinate the school visitations.

(b) funding for adolescent identification activities. This will be accomplished with the help of the local sheriff's department. Students in grades 4-7 (and perhaps K-3) will be fingerprinted and other relevant information gathered and filed with law enforcement offices. Student identification cards will also be provided by this business for these students. The writer of this practicum will coordinate this

activity with the convenience store, school, parents, and sheriff's department.

Summary

The writer of this practicum visited the business identified for partnership with each of the grades 4-7. The writer explained to the appropriate person at each business the concept of partnerships between school and business. The desired participation from each particular business was clearly explained. The objectives for partnership and strategies for implementation (see p. 39-47) were discussed with the business personnel. A copy of this information was given to each business. All the businesses which were requested for partnerships eagerly agreed to become partners.

A timeline was developed by the writer for each of the partnerships involved so that both the school and the business were aware of the services to be provided. If the partnership involved students leaving the school premises, the writer made arrangements with the necessary school person for bus transportation for the students. If the schedule of planned activities corresponded to the writer's planning period, she accompanied the students on their visits to the particular business.

The writer monitored the partnerships formed to ensure they were effective and following the timeline which had been developed. Telephone conversations and personal contacts with personnel from the businesses and with the teachers of students involved provided information concerning the planned activities. Because of moving into a new school and having numerous changes with which to adjust for the entire operations of the school, some modifications were made from time

to time for the various partnership activities. Publicity was provided for local newspaper and radio (see Appendix E). The writer will recognize the businesses that formed partnerships with the middle grades at the annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet which will be held in January of 1991. Plaques of appreciation from the school will be presented to the businesses.

The school in which this practicum took place provides the Skills for Adolescence (1988) program which is currently being taught in grades six and seven. Throughout the program, the instructors remember that students today come from many different types of families, some of which include single parent, foster care, grandparent care, etc. Thus, each students is encouraged to involve any adult to whom he/she is close even if that adult is not his/her birth parent. The program suggests three main ways to increase parent involvement. The first is that students are encouraged to seek help with homework assignments from parents as well as to discuss with parents topics and issues that have been discussed in Skills for Adolescence class at school. Another method for involving parents is that of providing each student's parents with a paperback text entitled The Surprising Years: Understanding Your Changing Adolescent-A Book for Parents. This is an easy-to-read book which offers practical answers to everyday questions parents of young people may have. It also parallels the curriculum of the student text with five main topics: The Changes of Growing Up, Building Self-Confidence, How to Talk Together-and Listen, The Family-Getting Along Together, and Alcohol and Other Drugs-Some Questions and Answers.

The third method for increasing parent involvement is through parent meetings. A facilitator's guidebook is provided during the intensive twenty-five hour training required for a person to become a

Skills for Adolescence instructor. This guidebook gives step-by-step information, handouts, and overhead transparencies for use in conducting the series of four meetings. The topics and issues for each meeting also parallel the content of the curriculum with four main topics: Improving Self-confidence in Your Child, Improving Communication Skills, Solving Family Conflicts with Love and Limits, and Talking with Your Child About Drugs.

The writer of this practicum coordinated these meetings and took a major part in the planning and completition of this series of meetings. Audio cassettes of support material for the Skills for Adolescence program were made available to those who attended the meetings and other interested people. The writer attempted to provide meaningful incentives for both the parents and the children of those who attend the meetings. Awarding of four door prizes at each meeting provided incentive for adults attendance. Students who had an adult in attendance at each meeting received a free icee cream at school the following day. Those students who were represented by an adults at all four meetings received a Certificate of Excellence at the Awards Day program at the school. Again, publicity both prior to and following each of the four session increased the effectiveness of them. The writer of this practicum provided such publicity (see Appendix G).

After being requested to do so, the Cooperative Extension Agency provided career education activities through 4-H Club for students. The main thrust of these sessions dealt with occupations relating to the local agriculture businesses. Thus, students were able to better understand the jobs that many of their friends and family members have. A representative from the local Farm Bureau spoke with students in grade seven. He explained the very significant part agriculture plays in this

state and in this county. Numerous students then participated in an essay contest sponsored by this organization. The title of their essays was "Agriculture as a Business."

The art projects created by students in grades five, six, and seven to be displayed at the partner businesses were part of the Artsense curriculum (Crouse, 1989) used in those grades. These art instruction video programs encourage innovation, creativity, and self-expression. Also, the human attribute of judgement is developed. Each of the three levels of Artsense has four videotapes with tezching guides. Each level deals with color, form, line, and space/shape. Each tape features a basic element of art with an entertaining lesson, demonstration, fine art examples, and five project ideas. The teaching guide provides art vocabulary, simple project plans, and suggestions for integrated art/subject activities. One of the strongest components of Artsense is helping students to feel self-worth for their artistic creations. Having these displayed in public definitely strengthened the pleasure and learning for the students.

Throughout the entire implementation period of this practicum, news articles with pictures and radio announcements were provided to the local media to provide publicity for the businesses involved in the partnerships (see Appendix D). It was hoped that this increased and improved the sense of community in the area.

Upon the conclusion of all partnership activities, teachers of grades 4-7 responded to the questionnaire (see Appendix F). A comparison of the questionnaire results prior to and following implementation was made; this indicated, to some degree, the effectiveness of the school/business partnerships formed during the 1989-90 school year. The writer of the practicum visited each of the

businesses involved in partnerships to become familiar with their feelings concerning the effectiveness of the partnership. These discussions were used as the basis for improvements for the next school term.

The teachers of grades 4-7 for the next school term later discussed the advantages of continuing and/or modifying the partnerships formed the preceeding year. Based on these discussions, plans were formed for school/business partnerships for the 1990-1991 school term.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This practicum was designed to increase parental and business involvement in grades 4-7 by forming partnerships between school and local businesses. The results of this project were positive in that 5 partnerships were formed between local businesses and the school. Each of the grades 4-7 developed bonds with local/area businesses. As proposed, the school-at-large was successful in forming a partnership. Furthermore, the writer of this practicum was able to secure funding for a project sponsored by the Media Specialist of the school where this practicum took place. Thus, this practicum resulted in positive strides toward increasing business involvement with the local school.

FOURTH GRADE

The focus of the activities for these students was to help them become more aware of different occupations which do not require a college education. Yet, it was also desired that students realize the financial stability possible by choosing one of the identified occupations.

A partnership was formed with the local Hardee's fast food restaurant. Rather than have the employees of Hardee's visit the students in their school classrooms, students were able to actually

visit the restaurant during a field trip. The students were able to hear explanations given by the manager, assistant manager, and trainees concerning the responsibilities, training required, salary, etc., of working in a fast food restaurant. The students were especially excited to realize that anyone who is at least 16 years old can work at Hardee's. The employees did an exceptional job of stressing that resposibility is very important for workers. They also explained that Hardee's prefers not to employ school dropouts. Finding out exactly how many hamburgers, fries, and soft drinks are served in a week helped students realize the significance of this business in their community.

Although the fourth-grade teachers had wanted Hardee's to provide incentives for school attendance, it was mutually decided by the writer, the teachers, and administrators that doing this for just one of the 8 grades at the school would not be proper. Thus, it is hoped that plans will be made to implement an incentive program for grades K-7 for the next school term which will reward attendance, good behavior, and achievement. Managers and owneers of the business indicated their willingness to participate in such a program once it developed.

When the writer of this practicum contacted the area technical school, the personnel requested that students visit the school rather than some of the teachers and administrators visit the fourth-grade students in their classroom. Thus, the writer of this practicum was able to arrange a field trip for those students to the technical school, which is 35 miles away. The students were also able to visit a factory which makes plastic containers. Thank-you letters and classroom discussions were included in the follow-up activities led by each of the fourth-grade teachers after their visits.

The day-long field trip to the technical school and the plastic

factory was the highlight of the students' year. Although they were young to be thinking about possible future occupations, they were amazed to realize that a person can go to school to learn to drive a big truck, fix the air conditioner, or grow plants. They were each given an ice cream and a small plant as they received explanations of the different courses of study available.

The day's trip also included a visit to a plastic manufacturing plant. This business provides many different sizes and shapes of containers for many products. The students were given a guided tour through the plant with explanations provided by the owner and manager. Seeing the tiny virgin beads of plastic resin being heated, melted, molded, and cooled so that containers resulted was very informative for the students. They were also shown how defective containers are broken into small pieces so they can be reheated and remolded for future use. Thus, the students were able to realize that this plastic operation created very little, if any, waste. Because plastic is not biodegradable, it was especially significant to understand that this business must work very diligently to see that no waste remains.

A newspaper article (see Appendix D) appeared in the local paper. A public service announcement concerning the partnership with Hardee's and visit to the technical school and plastic factory were heard on a local station. A plaque of appreciation will be presented to Hardee's at the annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet to be held at the first of the year.

FIFTH GRADE

A partnership was formed between the fifth grade and Dollar General

Distribution Center. Classroom teachers provided students with instruction concerning wholesale and retail sales. This was followed by a fieldtrip to the local distribution center.

Upon arrival, the students were shown a video detailing the founding and history of the company as well as an overview of its current operations. Because this is the only completely computerized business of its sort for Dollar General, the students were very impressed with the usage of modern technology.

Officials of the company as well as blue collar workers spoke with the students concerning the different types of jobs available, training, salary, etc. It was explained that the local distribution centers provides merchanise for over 400 retail stores. General discussions among students, faculty, and center employees stressed the need for students to be responsible and dependable. Striving for high grades in school, learning all that is taught, and staying in school were several of the ways identified which will help ensure young persons will develop into productive members of the work force.

Students wrote thank-you letters and held informal classroom discussions following their visit. Students also participated in several art projects suggested by the ARTSENSE curriculum (Crouse, 1989) which were placed on display at the warehouse. After watching a videotaped art instruction which included a lesson, demonstration, fine art examples, and five project ideas, the students decided upon a particular project upon which to work. Each project dealt with one of the four basic components of art: color, forms, line, or space/shape. Having their projects displayed in public strengthened the students' feelings of self-worth for their artistic creations. It is planned that the art displays will be an on-going activitiy for the next school year.

Because of moving into a new school facility in the middle of the school term, many plans and projects had to be modified. This was the case with the proposed visit to the local retail Dollar General store. There was not enough time during the school year for students to take this field trip. It is hoped that the fifth grade class in following years will be able to have this experience. A newspaper article (see Appendix D) and announcements on the radio were provided to the local news media. A plaque of appreciation will be presented to Dollar General at the the annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

SIXTH GRADE

A partnership with Brockway Standard, which is the largest employer in the county, was formed for the sixth grade. This plant manufacture containers from metal. Classroom teachers provided instruction concerning the use of machinery on an assembly line and the importance each worked has for ensureing the mechanized process functions smoothly. Following classroom study of the Industrial Revolution, students were able to visit the local factory where so many of their parents and friends are employeed. Several employees participated in a presentation for the students which explained how blank sheets of metal are made into containers. Because of rules concerning insurance coverage for the factory, students were unable to actually see the heavy machines at work. Yet, they were shown samples of each process through which the metal goes before it is shipped to the purchaser.

Thank-you letters and samples of student art projects were sent to Brockway Standard following the students' visit. The art projects were results of the ARTSENSE curriculum (Crouse, 1989) used in the local

school. This series of videotape lessons provides basic instruction in color, line, form, and space/shape, which are the basic components of any type of art. The lessons encourage innovation, creativity, and self-expression. The students were excited and pleased to have their work displayed at the manufacturing plant. It is planned that the art display will continue as new art projects are displayed approximately once a month. Plans are also being made for a poster contest next school year among the students with the theme of "Safety at Work." A newspaper article (see Appendix D) and radio announcements appeared in local media. A plaque will be presented to Brockway Standard at the Annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

SEVENTH GRADE

Clinch Memorial Hospital and the seventh-grade class formed a partnership. The main objectives of this partnerships included helping students becaome more knowledgeable concerning medical services available in this county, providing hospital employees interaction with adolescent students in an effort to encourage the adolescents to sue the medical facilities more efficiently, and providing students the opportunity to learn more about the many employment opportunities in the health care field.

Students visited the local hospital. Employees in each department explained and demonstrated the methods and techniques used in that particular area of the medical center. Students who had parent permission were able to have their blood typed. Touring the hospital helped students realize the many different types of work that goes on there. From the pharmacy, to the kitchen, to the laundry, to the

physical therapy, to the X-ray lab, to the respiratory lab, students were surprised to acknowledge just how many people are needed to provide quality medical care.

Following the visit, the hospital administrator and the nursing supervisor visited the students at school. They spoke informally with each class explaining and discussing jobs available in health care services, education required for each, training needed, salaries, etc. A Rescue Squad vehicle and the EMT's that travel with it also visited the school, allowed the students to view their equipment, and discussed their jobs and procedures with the students.

Thank-you letters, newspaper articles (see Appendix D), and radio announcements provided follow-up activities as the students expressed their appreciation and enthusiasm for the partnership formed. A display of student art projects was placed in the lobby of the hospital. This display of art projects was changed periodically as students the ARTSENSE curriculum (Crouse, 1989) is provided for students in grade seven. Following each lesson which relates to color, form, line, or space/shape, students are allowed to choose a project from a list of suggestions. Once these projects are completed, the students' works are displayed at the hospital. Having these so that the public may f=view their work definitly strengthens the pleasure and increases the desire to increase learning for the students. A plaque of appreciation will be presented to Clinch Memorial Hospital at the annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

MEDIA CENTER AND SCHOOL-AT-LARGE

A partnership was formed between the local bank and the Media

Center of the school where the writer of this practicum teaches. The local bank provided funds for rewards that accompany the Accelerated Reader Program which is used in grades 4-7. This program allowed students to earn points by reading books and successfully answering questions on computer about each book. The program proved to provide strong motivation for students as the excitment for working on a computer led the students to enjoy many hours of pleasure reading.

Because there were no federal, state, or local funds which could be used to purchase the rewards that accompany this program, the local bank agreed to fund this project each year that the Accelerated Reader Program is used at the school. Newspaper publicity (see Appendix D) and radio announcements were used to share information about this donation. A plaque of appreciation will be presented at the annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet. The Media Specialist offered to prepare a display of pictures of the winners for the bank. It had been planned that winners of the Accelerated Reader awards would be able to tour the bank facility for explanations and discussions concerning the operation, career opportunities, training required, salaries, tec. at the local financial institution. Yet, winners of the awards were unable to visit the bank because of time shortage. It is hoped that this will become a reality next year.

Fuel South/Flash Foods was asked to form a partnership with the entire school. This company provided ice cream treats for all students K-7 as they visited the new school prior to their moving into the the completed facility. Because the building was not completely finished in time for students to visit prior to reporting for the first day of classes there, the refreshments were not used as planned. Neither were the plans developed by the writer of this practicum for touring the new

facility utilized.

Yet, another opportunity to provide ice cream treats for students in grades K-7 arose soon after moving into the new school building. The ice cream treats were given to the children upon the completion of Panther Den Playground. This was built at the school by volunteers with the direction of two persons from the Robert Leathers Company of Ithica, New York. The community raised $55,000 to buy the materials needed which had not been donated. The total value of the play area once completed was $175,000. All children at school had helped by soaking nails, sanding boards, and carrying gravel into the area. They were rewarded with ice cream as they watched their dreams of a new playground become reality in only five days of construction. Although it was not a part of the practicum project, the writer of this practicum provided newspaper publicity for the playground project as funds and volunteer labor were sought.

Fuel South/Flash Foods was also asked to support an Adolescent Identification program (see Appendix E). The school photographer has agreed to supply a copy of each child's picture so it can be attached to the form. The writer of this practicum has prepared a letter for parents (see Appendix F) requesting their permission for fingerprinting their children. This request letter will be sent to parents soon after the new school year begins. The local Sheriff's Department was contacted and has agreed to do the fingerprinting of the children. This information will then be placed on file at the local courthouse. Fuel South/Flash Foods has also agreed to provide an identification card for students at the school. The school photographer and the writer of this practicum continue to look for the best method and techniques for completing this project. It is hoped that this also can be accomplished

when the student's school pictures are taken in early fall.

A newspaper article (see Appendix D) describing the business's donation of ice cream treats was provided for the local media. Additional articles will appear as the Adolescent Identification program and student identification card project is completed. A plaque of appreciation will be presented to this company at the annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Following the formation of the partnerships between grades/school and businesses indicated abouve, teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix A). Fifteen teachers of the total 18 teachers of grades 4-7 responded to the questionnaire. A comparison of the questionnaire results prior to and following implementation was made; this indicated the effectiveness of the school/business partnerships formed.

The questionnaire contained the same items one through eight as did the questionnarie used prior to making any effort to increase business and/or prental involvement. Teachers indicated that business involvement had increased as a result of this practicum project. Yet, they continue to feel that more involvement would lead to a more effective local educational system. Responses indicated that greater effort should be made to see that the employees of local businesses (which are, in fact, the parents and families of the local students) visit the school more often. It is believed that having local people actually in the school will help them become more knowledgeable concerning the local educational process. Because education is everyone's business, the general public will become more familiar with

currirulum and instructional techniques if they visit the school.

It was further decided that such programs as students "shadowing" employees, business employees tutoring students, supplying exhibits, and sponsoring contests would provide additional chances for local business employees to support the educational program currently being offeren in the school. Offering speakers, providing demonstrations, donating materials, recognizing achievements and attendance with awards, donating funds, showing appreciation of teachers, and assisting with career guidance programs were additional suggestions made concerning increasing business/parent involvement with the school. It was also suggested that a formal cermony be held to signify the froming of the partnerhips. This could be done douring the annual open house held at the school following the completion of the first six weeks of school.

Allowing the students to visit the partner business was very rewarding as students were able to actually understand the committment the particular business had made to the school when it agreed to form the partnership with the grade or school-at-large. Teachers particularly enjoyed having a "preplanned" field trip; yet, teachers indicated having more time for discussion between students and business employees would have made the visits more meaningful. Allowing students to visit businesses in smaller groups would also have increased the opportunity for more discussion. Teachers indicated a strong preference for increasing the number of local field trips as educators often take for granted that students have visited and know about small local businesses.

Students and teachers were especially excited about the art displays and were trying to plan more activities for students to do for the business. Some of the suggestions made concerning ways the students

could help or support the businesses included the following: providing entertainment for events, preparing bulletin boards, welcoming partners into the school for special events, helping with beautification of the business, and participating in community projects sponsored by the business. In all activities, the emphasis should be on human involvement rather than simply financial support.

The teachers were also pleased with the significance the businesses placed upon responsibility when the employees spoke with the students. Explaining how important the students are to the entire community and how much the community cares about the students further enhanced the partnership for the students. It was also mentioned that the partnership activities for students in grades 4-7 may help students who seem at-risk of dropping out school remain in school until their graduation.

Teachers indicated that comments they had heard concerning the four parent meetings were very positive. Parents seemed very receptive to the information and discussion at the meetings and encouraged more activities of this type. Many suggested having the same series of meetings again because they feel participation would be greater as those attending will have spoken favorably to their friends. It was also suggested that the meetings be held during lunch at several of the larger businesses in the local area. Providing child care during the meetings might have improved parent attendance. Finally, it was suggested that teachers make a more concerted effort to send home notes of positive nature with students. Thus, parents may begin to realize that the school wants their involvement.

After comparing the results of the questionnares prior to and following implementation of this practium, plans have been made to

continue the partnerships for the next school term. It has been planned that the chairperson for each grade will become the direct contact person between the grade and the business. The writer of this practicum will be the coordinator of the partnerships formed.

All of the businesses involved in the partnerships formed as part of this practicum have indicated their desire to continue the relationship, to strengthen it, and to make it even more effective. The business persons expressed their genuine interest in the local educational system although this interest is not always evident. The business personnel further indicated that having just one contact person from the grade/school and one contact person from the business would make it easier for the business to know and understand the request being made and to ensure that there is not a duplication of services/funds as well as ensure that meaningful activities are planned and implemented.

The students involved in this project indicated they especially enjoyed and learned when actually visiting the business. They also felt a sense of genuine caring and committment from both their teachers and the business personnel. Many reported later seeing some of the business employees and being able to discuss what they had learned during their visits to the business.

It is planned that each of the grades 4-7 will continue the partnerships begun during the last school term. By doing this, students should realize a contuance of business involvement in the local educational process. Once the new school year begins, discussions with the students themselves will generate additonal thoughts and ideas for the partnerships for the upcoming year. The teachers of each grade under the direction of the grade chairperson and the writer of the practicum will finalize a monthly timeline for activities of the partnership for

the 190-91 school year.

It is hoped that her duties and responsibilities will be such that the writer of this practicum can make efforts to form partnerships between grades K-3 and local businesses. Although teachers and administrators understood that this practicum dealt only with grades 4-7, much interest has been generated for forming partnerships for the other grades. All teachers as well as administrators have indicated the desire for additional partnerships to be formed. Because all grades K-7 are now housed at one facility, it is even more important that all stdudents in all grades be given the opportunity to benefit from school/business partnerships.

PARENT MEETINGS

The second objective of this practicum was increasing parental involvement in grades six and seven by having parents/family attend four meetings held in conjunction with the Skills for Adolescents (1988). Although the people attending the meetings expressed appreciation and heightened efforts toward improving life with their children, there was not 33% parent/family attendance from students in sixth or seventh grade. Attendance records indicated 12% of sixth-grade parents/families and 16% of seventh-grade parents/families attended.

The handbook Supporting Young Adults: A Guide for Leading Parent Meetings is one component of the Skills for Adolescence program. This material is provided as part of the 25 hours of training required for a person to be qualified to be an instructor for this program. The four parent meetings are described in detail in the handbook. Information for handouts and overhead transparencies is given as well as a

step-by-step description of activities for each meeting.

The topics of the parent meetings were the following: Improving Self-confidence in Your Child, Improving Communication Skills, Solving Family Conflicts with Love and Limits, and Talking with Your Child About Drugs (Skills for Adolescence, 1988). The goals identified for the meetings included the following:

* To help parents build their children's self-confidence by encouraging their children to see themselves as skillful, appreciated, and responsible for their own behavior.
* To help parents review and practice effective listening and responding skills and incorporate these improved skills into family communication patterns.
* To show parents how strong communication skills can help them work with their children to set limits and resolve conflicts.
* To give parents the basic facts about drugs and drug use and help them use the skills learned in earlier meetings to talk with their children about alcohol and other drugs.
* To help parents become familiar with and reinforce, when appropriate, the skills and concepts their children learn through Skills for Adolescence.
* To provide opportunities for parents to meet with other parents of young adolescents and discuss common concerns.

In order to meet the goals listed above, the meetings are structured as follows: concepts and skills are clearly introduced, participants are encouraged to discuss the new concepts and skills, parents practice the concepts and skills in structured activities, and the application of new skills to everyday situations is stressed through discussions. (p. 3-4).

Adults attending the meetings returned a total of 57 completed evaluation forms. All except two of the forms were marked to indicate the meetings were very helpful. The other two indicated the meetings were somewhat helpful. The completed evaluation forms of each of the meetings indicated that the adults felt they had learned much and greatly benefited from the experiences. Parents indicated they liked the way the leaders (instructors of this program) used visuals to stress the different skills and ideas being discussed. Others indicated they liked the way the leaders were organized so that meetings ran smoothly as they presented the material without judging or sounding too authoritative. Sharing experiences with other parents and role playing were two additional positive comments concerning the meetings. Audience involvement and the offering of practical suggestions made the sessions very realistic and enjoyable. The strongest suggestion for improvement refered to having more meetings and involving more parents in similar learning and sharing experiences.

Several incentives were used in order to increase interest and participation in these meetings. Students whose parent/family attended the meetings received a free ice cream each day following the meeting. Also, students who were represented at all four meetings by an adult received a Certificate of Excellence at the Awards Day program held during the last week of school. There were four of these awards in grade six and ten in grade seven. The theme of "First Aid for Families of Teenagers" was used as an effort by the writer of the practicum to increase interest. At the end of each meeting, items were added to a First Aid Kit that could be used when living with adolescents (see Appendix H). Ending the meetings with a bit of humor helped those in attendance realize that adolescents are unique people who will

eventually mature into responsibile adults if given help, support, and love from their families.

UNANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

Although there were numerous unexpected outcomes of this practicum, two were very significant. After the writer of this practicum was designated as the contact person for the State Department of Education, she was invited to attend a conference concerning Georgia Partnerships In Education (GaPIE). The local school system defrayed the expense of joining the state organization and the expense of the three-day conference. Being able to hear first-hand about the statewide effort concerning partnerships between schools and businesses was very exciting and rewarding for the writer. Many contacts were made with people throughout the state who are involved with this effort. Plans have been made for the writer to attend next year's conference as well.

Another significant, unanticipated outcome was the writer's attending a local Chamber of Commerce meeting to solicite this organization's endorsement of the partnerships formed between the grade/school and local businesses. After the writer presented relevant information, the Chamber of Commerce voted to endorse this project. A sub-committee of the Chamber was also formed to support and direct this effort. Three Chamber members will serve with the writer of this practicum, the school principal, and two teachers as a local task force for developing and strengthening partnerships between school and businesses. The local effort for this project has been identified as Clinch PIE.

The writer of this practicum developed a pamphlet (see Appendix I)

which will be used by the Chamber of Commerce as information for perspective businesses and industry that seek knowledge about the local area. This pamphlet will also be used as initial contact between businesses already in the area that may desire to become partners. Because of the writer's interest in community, she has been requested to participate in "Community Leadership: A Community Perspective." This is a new leadership development program, to begin within a month, sponsored by the local Cooperative Extension Service, Industrial Authority, and Chamber of Commerce. The 30 hour seminar will help develop basic leadership skill, identify major issues and concerns of the area, and identify goals for improving the community for the participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications of the work as reported in this practicum can be far reaching. The writer agrees that having partnerships between school students and businesses is very meaningful and rewarding for both the students and the employees of the businesses. It is recommended that the coordinator of this effort have at least half of each school day to work solely on partnerships. The results and rewards of the partnerships as well as the organizational foundation would be much stronger if the coordinator had more time to devote to this than does a regular, full-time classroom teacher.

Another recommendation involves the identification of more activities that the school in general and the students in particular can provide for the businesses. Certainly the feeling of mutual benefits would be increased if students and faculties were doing more for the

businesses. Developing an incentive program for each grade in conjunction with the partner business would be very helpful in increasing student attendance and achievement as well as improving student behavior. Implementing several activities through which the community recognized the teachers in the local school system would also be very beneficial.

DISSEMINATION

This practicum will be disseminated to faculty members and administrators in the system where this writer teaches. Already, numerous discussions, among the writer and other educators and interested business persons, have developed as a result of the writer's interest and findings in the practicum. A copy of the abstract for the practicum will be submitted for publication in Chalktalk, the official publication of the school system. Chalktalk is published three times during each school year and distributed to parents of all students K-12 in the school system. The abstract will also be distributed to cluster members.

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